



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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**RUBEN PATRICK VALDES SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR
CONSPIRACY TO SMUGGLE ALIENS**

(El Paso, Texas) **United States Attorney Johnny Sutton, Anne Estrada, Deputy Special Agent in Charge / Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Luis Barker, Chief Patrol Agent / El Paso Sector of the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection** announced today that, **RUBEN PATRICK VALDES**, the 33-year-old leader of a major alien smuggling operation, was sentenced to 327 months in federal prison without parole.

In addition to the prison term, U.S. District Judge Phillip Martinez ordered Valdes to pay a \$25,000 fine. On April 17, 2003, a federal jury convicted Valdes of Conspiracy to Smuggle Aliens for Commercial Advantage and Private Financial Gain and a substantive charge of Alien Smuggling for Commercial Advantage and Private Financial Gain.

Valdes and his brother, 31-year-old Roman Martin Valdes, were responsible for smuggling hundreds of illegal aliens from Mexico into the United States. Evidence presented at trial revealed that the brothers recruited American truck drivers from bars and clubs in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico to use their commercial vehicles, usually tractor-trailers, to transport aliens from El Paso, Texas, to various locations throughout the United States. The truck drivers were offered a substantial fee to transport groups of aliens. The aliens were first smuggled from Ciudad Juarez to El Paso, Texas, then transported to various staging areas in El Paso, Texas by members of the Valdes alien smuggling organization. The aliens were kept at the staging locations until they were delivered to the truck drivers for transportation to other locations in the United States. Furthermore, the brothers organized the smuggling of at least one to five loads of illegal aliens per week, each load containing between five to one hundred aliens between early 1999 and mid 2002. The El Paso Sector of the U.S. Border Patrol estimates that between January 29, 1999 and March 28, 2002, federal agents detained and interviewed more than 900 undocumented aliens whose presence in the United States was linked to the Valdes smuggling organization.

Evidence elicited at trial showed that on July 27, 2002, a load of aliens was illegally transported by the Valdes alien smuggling organization, from El Paso, Texas to Dallas, Texas. When the tractor trailer holding the aliens stopped in Dallas County, Texas, the truck driver discovered that two of the aliens were dead and several others were in critical condition as a result of the inhumane conditions in the tractor trailer.

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The truck drivers, Troy Phillip Dock and Jason Steven Sprague, along with several other members of the Valdes alien smuggling organization, were indicted in the Eastern District of Texas, in the Sherman Division, under the federal Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) for the deaths of the aliens. Border Patrol agents linked the defendants in that indictment and the smuggled alien load to the Valdes brothers' smuggling enterprise. Both truck drivers have pled guilty in the Eastern District of Texas and are awaiting sentencing.

"Ruben Patrick Valdes' sentence of over 27 years in federal prison should send a chilling message to coyotes across the Southwest Border. The U.S. Government will aggressively prosecute these cases and will seek severe punishment upon conviction. What happened to Jose Gaston Ramirez, Pio Quinto Cabrera Vasquez and their companions is inexcusable. Mr. Valdes earned every day of this sentence," stated U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton.

"This case demonstrates the resolve of the U.S. Government to investigate and vigorously prosecute alien smugglers who are in the business of exploiting illegal immigrants for profit," El Paso Sector Chief Luis Barker said. "Hopefully, this conviction sends a strong message to others who engage in this criminal activity," he added.

"The Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is committed to stopping human smuggling. Today's sentence sends a clear and loud message to smuggling rings that their heinous acts will not be tolerated and will be punished to the fullest extent of the law," said Acting Assistant Secretary Michael Garcia.

Roman Valdes, who pled guilty on April 11, 2003, to Count I—Conspiracy to Smuggle Aliens, faces up to eight years in federal prison. He is scheduled for sentencing tomorrow at 8:00am.

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton also commended the efforts of federal agents with the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security (formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service), Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (Border Patrol), Mexican federal authorities and the Mexican Attorney General's office for bringing the Valdes brothers to justice. The success of this joint law enforcement endeavor is another example of the excellent cooperation between law enforcement officials of the United States and Mexico.

This case was prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney Tom Roepke and Assistant United States Attorney Greg McDonald.

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